

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

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Action

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Rec'd: December 12, 1958

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12:07 p.m.

RMR TO: Secretary of State

NO: 2193, December 12, 4 p.m.

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SENT DEPARTMENT 2193; REPEATED INFORMATION BERLIN 48, BONN 190, LONDON 461, MOSCOW 115.

Embassy telegram 2166 to Department.

Couvet de Murville made following comments to me this morning which modify or supplement French view on Western response to Soviet note on Berlin, as outlined referenced telegram.

He definitely favors sending Western reply as soon as possible, preferably before Christmas. He suggested it might be desirable in interests of speed for quadripartite drafting group to stay on in Paris after NATO Ministerial meeting to work on reply. Although expressing complete agreement to participation Federal Republic in drafting Western response, he reiterated French objections to Bonn as location for drafting group. In addition reasons previously cited and reported by Embassy for this French position, he said drafting in Bonn might be provocative as far as Soviets are concerned.

Couvet said he feels Western replies should be separate, with substance the same but not identical in wording.

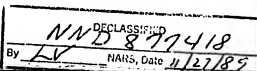
Foreign Minister confirmed that French do not believe it would be advisable to make counter-proposals on Berlin itself for advance new proposals on German reunification which would represent any change in basic Western position adopted Geneva 1955. However, he thinks Western powers should reiterate willingness discuss with Soviets questions of German reunification, European security and peace treaty.

On possible revision in contingency planning re access to Berlin,

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Couve said he was not familiar with details this problem, which should be put to experts in first instance. (Embassy has previously reported Foreign Office working level view that present plan is about as far as we should go.)

Couve agrees there must be mention of Berlin in NATO communique, but he feels statement should not be too detailed. He believes it will be more effective if main lines of Western position are left to be formulated in replies of US, UK and France to Soviet note.

Although Couve spoke firmly of unacceptability of Soviet proposals, he said it is clear that biggest and most immediate problem before us relates to use of forces to protect allied rights in Berlin. Should we use force? If so, at what stage, to what extent, and where? Couve indicated that he had come to no firm conclusions himself on these questions, which he expects will be thrashed out in Foreign Ministry talks over week-end.

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